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Claims:

1. A method for time-stamping a document comprising:
  - a. receiving identifying data associated with a document D at an outside agency;
  - b. creating at said outside agency a first receipt based on said identifying data and a linking value;
  - c. creating at said outside agency a second receipt based on said linking value and a time indication;
  - d. certifying said first and second receipts at said outside agency using a cryptographic signature scheme.
2. The time-stamping method of claim 1 wherein said identifying data comprises a digital representation of at least a portion of said document.
3. The time-stamping method of claim 2 wherein said identifying data comprises a digital sequence derived by application of a deterministic function to at least a portion of said document.
4. The time-stamping method of claim 3 wherein said digital sequence is a hash value derived by application of a one-way hashing function to at least a portion of said document.

5. The time-stamping method of claim 1 wherein said first receipt includes at least a portion of said identifying data and a nonce.

6. The time-stamping method of claim 1 wherein said first receipt includes a digital sequence generated by applying a pre-determined function to said identifying data.

7. The time-stamping method of claim 1 wherein one of said first and second receipts includes a user identification number associated with a user.

8. The time-stamping method of claim 7 wherein one of said first and second receipts includes a sequential record number.

9. A method for time-stamping a document comprising:

- transmitting identifying data associated with said document to an outside agency;
- receiving from said outside agency a first receipt signed by said outside agency using a cryptographic signature scheme, said first receipt including a first digital sequence generated based on said identifying data and a linking value; and
- receiving from said outside agency a second receipt signed by said outside agency using a cryptographic signature scheme, said second receipt containing a second digital sequence based on a time indication and said linking

value.

10. The time-stamping method of claim 9 wherein said identifying data comprises a digital representation of at least a portion of said document.
11. The time-stamping method of claim 10 wherein said identifying data comprises a digital sequence derived by application of a deterministic function to at least a portion of said document.
12. The time-stamping method of claim 11 wherein said digital sequence is a hash value derived by application of a one-way hashing function to at least a portion of said document.
13. The time-stamping method of claim 9 wherein said first receipt includes at least a portion of said identifying data and a nonce.
14. The time-stamping method of claim 9 wherein said first receipt includes a digital sequence generated by applying a pre-determined function to said identifying data.
15. The time-stamping method of claim 9 wherein one of said first and second receipts includes a user identification number associated with a user.

16. The time-stamping method of claim 15 wherein one of said first and second receipts includes a sequential record number.

17. The time-stamping method of claim 9 wherein a common cryptographic signature scheme is used to sign both said first and second receipts.

18. The time-stamping method of claim 9 wherein different cryptographic signature schemes are used to sign said first and second receipts.

19. The time-stamping method of claim 9 wherein said linking value is a nonce value.